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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000103

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BAGHDAD FOR POL, PAO, ROL COORDINATOR, NCT, IRMO

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SUBJECT: KIRKUK PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEMBERS BOYCOTT

REF: 05 KIRKUK 171

KIRKUK 00000103 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Scott Dean, Regional Coordinator (Acting), Reo
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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Arab council members boycott and Turcoman council members threaten to boycott the Kirkuk Provincial Council if the Kurdish bloc does not meet their demands.

Boycott Threatened

[1](#)2. (SBU) On April 18, Turcoman and Arab council members finally submitted candidates for provincial council leadership positions left vacant since the August 8, 2005 agreement (REFTEL). After eight months, they decided that an Arab would fill the deputy governor position, while the Turcoman would receive the remaining four posts.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Arab and Turcoman representatives on April 20 sent letters to the Provincial Council chairman, demanding that their candidates be ratified and that the remaining points of the August 8 agreement be implemented within three days or they would boycott. The PC Chairman took offense to this action, and as a result, all ethnic blocs are resorting to contrary positions, with the Arabs boycotting and the Turcoman threatening non-participation if demands are not met.

Kurdish position

[1](#)4. (SBU) The PC Chairman was frustrated that it took the two minority blocs eight months to come to an agreement and suddenly were giving him 72 hours to respond. He argued that the original agreement had expired and that not all Turcoman members had agreed on the new compromise. (NOTE. The agreement did call for candidates to be named by September 2005. We have heard conflicting reports that either five or seven of the nine Turcoman members agreed to the plan. END NOTE.) The PC Chairman called for special meetings to discuss the Arab and Turcoman demands on April 21 and again on April 23, with the USG participating as observers. He has threatened to withhold council members' privileges including pay, office space, and security if they continued to boycott.

Arab position

[1](#)5. (SBU) On April 18, Arab members sent a letter to the PC

Chairman with a list of demands, notifying the council of a boycott that became effective immediately. The demands stemmed from the August 2005 agreement concerning the leadership positions, but also enumerated several complaints, including hiring practices in Kirkuk, the Kurdification of the province, and the existence of Kurdish intelligence and militias that continue to target the Arab population. The Arab bloc agreed to attend the meetings to discuss these complaints, but failed to show on both occasions.

Turcoman position

¶16. (SBU) The Turcoman delivered a letter to the PC Council Chairman with similar demands as the Arabs. The Turcoman attended the first meeting to discuss their demands, but failed to accomplish much because the discussion devolved into an argument with the Kurdish bloc about whether their "suspension" or boycott was already effective, or if it would only come into effect if demands were not met. The Turcoman failed to attend the second meeting, sending a last minute note that stated they would be celebrating a Turcoman political holiday instead. The Turcoman bloc is not unified on the agreement concerning the leadership positions or the boycott and several members continue to work on daily council business.

Comment

¶18. (C) The Arab and Turcoman groups are aggravated at Kurdish dominance of provincial leadership. Their moves to boycott or threaten to boycott when they feel they are not being heard has been an effective tool in the past for garnering U.S. intervention on their behalf. The Kurds are accommodative to a point and are able to play politics more effectively by seeming to be the only group willing to negotiate.

Background note on provincial council

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¶19. (C) The Kirkuk provincial council consists of 41 members and is dominated by the Kirkuk Brotherhood List (KBL), which holds 26 seats. The KBL is Kurd-dominated, with PUK and KDP members controlling the agenda. The KBL also has 3 Arabs, 2 Turcoman, and 1 Assyrian member: but these members are marginalized, always vote with the list, and often are considered "quislings" for working so closely with the Kurds. Rizgar Ali (PUK Kurd) is the PC Chairman and effectively leads the KBL. The list holds an outright majority and has the ability to conduct council business without the other blocs. Thus far, however, the KBL has attempted to remain inclusive and has allowed the ethnic minority groups to participate, due to its own practical reasons, as well as coalition pressure to retain ethnic cooperation.

¶110. (C) Due to lack of participation in the last elections, the Arab bloc consists of six members derived from two political parties and two tribal groups. Arab bloc members often state that Arabs form a majority of the population in Kirkuk province, and their demands reflect that mindset. The Arab members interest in local government is generally limited to their desire to receive funding to be spent at their discretion. Less than half the bloc is actively engaged in provincial council business.

¶111. (C) The Turcoman group consists of nine members that are separated into many different political parties. The most defined subgroup consists of the Shia and Sunni groups, the latter being dominated by the Iraqi Turcoman Front (ITF).
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